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S E R M O N

PREACH'D at the

A S S I Z E S

Holden at

KINGSTON upon THAMES,

On Wednesday 30th of July, 1712.

Before the Right Honourable the

Lord Chief Justice *Parker*,

And the Honourable

Mr. Justice *Tracy*.

By ROBERT MOSS, D. D. Chaplain in Ordinary to Her
MAJESTY, and Preacher to the Honourable Society of
Gray's-Inn.

Published at the Request of the High Sheriff, and the Gen-
tlemen of the Grand-Jury.

L O N D O N :

Printed for RICHARD SARE at *Gray's-Inn-Gate* in Hol-
bourn, 1712.

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By ROBERT MOSE, D.D. Sermon
MAJESTY, and President of the
Court.

Printed at the Office of the
Printer of the Court.

L O N D O N :

Printed for RICHARD BARTHELEMY, in the
Street, 1712.

To the Worshipful

JOHN MITCHEL, Esq;

High Sheriff of the County of Surry,

And to the Gentlemen of the Grand-Jury of
the said County.

The Honourable <i>Honage</i> } Knights Finch, Esq; } of the	William Newland, Esq;
Sir Francis Vincent, Bart. } Shire.	George Meggot, Esq;
Sir James Clarke, Knight.	James Tischborn, Esq;
Edward Nicholas, Esq;	John Pettibard, Esq;
Edward Harvey, Esq;	William Salmon, Esq;
William Draper, Esq;	Thomas Williams, Esq;
George Vernon, Esq;	William Overman, Esq;
Thomas Lant, Esq;	Lawrence Parker, Esq;
Edward Thurland, Esq;	Richard Oldner, Gent.
	John Angell, Gent.

GENTLEMEN,



THIS Sermon was intended only as
a small Piece of Service to the
High Sheriff, which he was pleas'd
to over-rate by a great deal, even in the
Account of private Friendship: But you
have all thought fit to honour it with a
publick Notice, that, in my humble Opi-
nion,

Epistle Dedicatory.

tion, it could never deserve. The Subject of it indeed is so agreeable to unprejudic'd Reason, and so familiar to Mens inward Sense, that it must for ever approve it self to every generous, candid and honest Mind: And, I am persuaded, your entire Approbation of the Subject it self must be that which led you insensibly into the good liking of an honest, but imperfect, Discourse upon it: Which therefore (tho' conscious enough of the great Disadvantages under which it appears) I submit to your Pleasure, and commit to your Protection; being only ambitious, that my Compliance in this particular may pass for a real Testimony of that, which I am very willing to publish to the World, viz. the just Esteem and Honour I have for Persons of such Eminent Worth and Loyalty. I am,

GENTLEMEN,

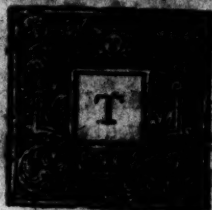
Your most Obedient,

Humble Servant,

R. Mofs.

MATTH. Chap. VII. Ver. 12.

*Therefore all things whatsoever
ye would that Men should do
to you, do ye even so to them:
for this is the Law and the
Prophets.*



THE Connexion of these Words is perhaps more difficult to be traced than needful to be enquired after. It may suffice, that it is a part of our Lord's most divine Sermon on the Mount, which consists chiefly of so many entire Precepts; and those, as it should seem, for the most part promiscuously set down, without any exact Order, or strict Coherence one with another.

AND probably the Particle *Therefore*, which stands at the Head of this Text, is rather Transitive than Illative; it rather leads on to a new Subject, than refers back to any thing preceding. And the Subject it leads to is such, as might well deserve a Place in this Heavenly Discourse,

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without

without being introduced by way of Inference, from any other Doctrine or Precept. For it is itself a first Principle in Reason and Morality, and therefore fitly made the invariable Standard of Equity by our Supreme Lawgiver. *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets.* That is to say, "This is not only pursuant to Nature's Law, but exactly conformable to the Law of *Moses*, as it was anciently and authentically interpreted by the Prophets, and as it is now restor'd to its genuine Meaning, and carried up to its just Pitch of Perfection by Me, who am much more than a Prophet, even the only begotten Son of God.

In prosecuting this Subject, I shall (1st) state the Rule or Precept of the Text, and set it in its proper Light. (2^{dly}.) I shall enquire into the general Ground and Reason of it, as it is a Law of Nature; and the special Obligation of it, as it is a Law of instituted Religion. (3^{dly}.) I shall consider how far its just Extent reaches. (4^{thly}.) I shall shew how applicable it is to all the good Uses and Purposes for which it was intended, and how well calculated to serve the Interests of Mankind, when duly so applied.

I. I shall state the Rule or Precept of the Text, and set it in its proper Light.

(1.) IN order to which be it observ'd first, that the Rule as it is here expressed in the Affirmative, *All things whatsoever ye would that Men should*

should do to you, do ye even so to them, is to be understood of all that *Good* which we naturally desire for our selves. For, *who will shew us any Good?* is the Voice that expresses the very Cravings of Nature. It is *Good*, that we not only earnestly covet, but justly Claim, when Reason guides our Passion aright in the pursuit of our real Interest. And the same *Good* consequently we also should be willing to afford to others in their turn, who certainly have in Nature as much Right to it, as passionate a Love for it, as we our selves can have.

(2.) IT is withal to be observ'd, that though the Rule is expressed in the affirmative only, yet is the negative necessarily included; namely, that whatsoever we would *not*, *i. e.* whatsoever *Evil* we would *not*, that Men should do to us, neither should we do the like unto them. For the same Principle of Self-love that makes Men so eagerly desirous of *Good*, gives them as strong an Aversion against *Evil*. And the same equitable Reason that obliges us to do all that *Good* to others, which we our selves might fairly expect in like Circumstances, will much more oblige us to refrain from doing any *Evil* to them; which were the Case our own, we should think much to receive at their Hands. Because that which binds to more, doth undoubtedly bind to less: And it is manifestly a less Degree of Good-will towards Men, barely to abstain from doing them that *Evil* which we ought not, than freely to do them that *Good* which we ought.

(3.) IT may be farther observ'd, that the Rule thus explained, as including both the affirmative

and the negative, gives us the full Sense and Import of that great Commandment, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*: And it is therefore in its Application, the adequate Measure of all Justice and all Charity, of every thing that comes under the Notion of Duty towards our Neighbour. For he that is ready with all Alacrity to do all that *Good* to others, which he himself, placed in the same Circumstances, might in reason demand from them: And he that is scrupulously tender of doing any kind of *Evil* to others, which he changing the Situation of Affairs again, might well think a hardship to himself: That Man, I say, does apparently measure his Affection towards his Neighbour, by the very same Respect and Care that he hath for himself; which is, to all Intents and Purposes, *to love him as himself*. And whosoever is thus cordially affected towards his Neighbour, cannot be wanting in any Office of Justice or Charity that is due unto him; inasmuch as *Love* (Love so grounded and so governed) is *the fulfilling of the Law*. For as the Man who loves himself (which Nature prompts us all to do) cannot reasonably be supposed, either to wish and design *Evil* for himself, or not to wish and design *Good* for himself; so, if he makes Self-love the equal Standard of that which he bears to others, he will not, he cannot offer that wrong to them, of which he hath a natural Abhorrence himself; nor withhold that *Good* from them, which were his dear self concerned, he would naturally and vehemently desire.

(4.) To prevent any wild or wilful Mistake in this Matter, it ought always to be observ'd and

and remembered, that though it is natural to us to abhor that which is Evil, and to covet that which is Good for our selves, yet is it possible for Nature to be extremely debauched, and Reason in a manner deposed, and for unreasonable and unnatural Appetite to usurp the Government of the Man. And in this Case most assuredly Good will be called Evil, and Evil Good: But the Nature of things will remain unchanged, though their Names may be arbitrarily varied. For instance, a Man may, by addicting himself to excessive drinking, contract an intemperate and insatiable Thirst; and measuring others by his own Greediness or Capacity, he may, and will probably, urge them to the same degree of Excess, that is become, even against Nature, habitual and delightful to himself, and in so doing, it is very sure he does just as he would be done by. And yet it were absurd to imagine, that such a disorderly Companion walks by the equitable Rule of the Text. And therefore the Rule is manifestly to be construed, not of depraved Will as it is hurried on by inordinate Appetite, but of the Will as it is, or ought to be, regularly guided by the Dictates of simple Nature and sober Reason.

(5.) It will be proper moreover to observe, that this Rule is never so to be interpreted, as to confound the natural Order of Things, and the mutual Relations betwixt Man and Man, which it aims chiefly to confirm and settle upon a true Foundation. And therefore the respective Duties hence arising, are not to be look'd upon as the same in kind, but only in proportion. As for example,

example. It cannot be supposed by virtue of this Rule, that the Father is obliged to pay all that Reverence and Obedience to his Son, which the Son reciprocally owes to his Father; for this would plainly invert the Order of Nature: But he is certainly obliged to shew all that Paternal Affection to his Child, which he himself either experienc'd, or might have justly expected from his Father before him: For *This* is to do proportionably, as he was willing when the Case was his own, that others should do unto him.

(6.) IT is very material to observe, that this Rule is ever so to be understood, as may make it fairly to consist with all other our respective Obligations; and in particular, with the Exercise of publick Authority, and that wholesome Discipline which is necessary to support the same. For example again; It is a Decree as ancient as *Noah*, and adopted, I believe, into the Laws of all civilized Nations, that *Who so sheddeth Man's Blood, by Man shall his Blood be shed*. And though there is no Judge who passes Sentence upon a Murderer, but would be naturally as desirous of Life, as that Murderer can be, were he himself liable to the same Sentence; yet in this Case, the Fact once prov'd, he is not so much at Liberty to shew Pity. For he is the Minister of God and his Vicegerent, and is under a superior Obligation to both, not to *hear the Sword in vain*, but to *execute Wrath* upon such a notorious Evil-doer, who hath no longer a Right to take Shelter under this Law of Humanity, because he hath violated it in the most outrageous manner, and deserves the Severity of Justice for so doing.

Nor

Nor is it a thing conceivable, that the Magistrate, in executing Vengeance upon such a flagrant Transgressor of this Law, should himself, for that very Reason, become an Offender against it; for *That* would suppose the Law to defeat and destroy it self, and at the same time to cut asunder the Nerves of all Discipline and all Government; which is too grossly absurd to be supposed of a Law, that carries, not only all the Marks of natural Prudence and Equity upon it, but also the undoubted Stamp of Divine Authority. Having therefore thus stated the Rule or Precept of the Text, and placed it in a proper Light, the next thing in Order is,

II. To enquire into the general Ground and Reason of it, as it is a Law of Nature; and the special Obligation of it, as it is a Law of instituted Religion.

(1.) AND, in the first Place, that it is the Dictate of unenlightened Nature, is indisputably clear; not so much from the private Sentiments of Heathens, and such as were perfect Strangers to Revelation, (though such are not wanting) as to the universal Sense and Reason of Mankind, which cannot but give Suffrage to it, when not extremely biassed or distorted by Passion. Make any Man the Judge, who is not perfectly savage, even though he never heard of *Moses* and the Prophets, or of Christ and his Apostles, yet will he immediately discern the Equity and Reasonableness of this natural Principle by its own Light: And, if he chance to see the Innocent violently oppressed,

oppressed, or the Unfortunate barbarously insulted over, he will be ready to cry out, even with an Air of Authority, to the inhuman Persecutor, *Die for shame!* Would you be glad to be so serv'd your self? Do, in the name of *Justice* do, but what you would be done unto.

AND that what is thus universally agreeable to unprejudic'd Reason has the Sanction of a Law, is evident at first Sight; because there is a natural Penalty annex'd to it, which the Transgressors of it are sure to be made sensible of as soon as they come to themselves: For there is no Man, who hath not wholly divested himself of Humanity, but whose Conscience will condemn and punish him too, for being treacherous, or ungrateful, or cruel, to his Brother, when once that Passion is allayed which tempted him to commit the Iniquity: And that there is Iniquity committed, that some Law is actually transgressed, the Self-condemnation attending upon such Actions is Indication sufficient.

AND we need not seek far for the original Ground and Reason of this Law: For, if we consider it, we shall soon find, that it results immediately from the very Frame of our Nature, and the Condition of humane Life, inasmuch as all Men are sent into the World with well nigh equal Necessities and equal Capacities: Our Necessities are such as make us mutually dependent one on another; and our Capacities are such as enable us to be mutually helpful and serviceable: And both these Considerations join'd together do at once dispose and constrain Men to enter into Society;
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the Cement of which Society becomes as strong as the Necessity that gives rise to it; and the Comforts enjoyed in it (and not to be enjoyed without it) are so many reciprocal Engagements inviolably to uphold and maintain it. And being thus framed, as we are, for Society, and thus happily combined together in it, it must unavoidably follow, that what is good for one Man would equally be good for another placed in the same Circumstances, and that what is evil for one would be no less evil for another when so placed: And consequently there is equal Reason for all Men to do that (and that only) unto every Man which they in a like Case, might judge reasonable that others should do unto them.

AND this Reason must have the binding Force and Authority of a Law, because the same Wise and Sovereign Providence that formed Men sociable Creatures and ranged them together in Society, hath also, by Virtue of this Providential Appointment, as well as the natural Course of things, made this equitable Practice the necessary Means of maintaining that Society in Peace and good Order.

AND this Law, it cannot be denied, is sufficiently promulged, because it is so legibly and so deeply engraven upon the Hearts of all Men, that it hath been universally acknowledged and approved, and will for ever approve it self to natural Reason and Conscience: Into this therefore we resolve it, as it is a Branch of the Law of Nature.

(2) LET us next see wherein the special Obligation of it consists, as it is a Law of instituted Religion: For such, without all Question, it is according to the Jewish as well as Christian Institution. The *Levitical* Law says expressly, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*, (*Levit. 19.*) and that well-regulated Affection is the Root from which this Rule of Practice naturally grows: And we have the negative Part of the Rule it self in the Book of *Tobit*, (*Ch. 4.*) *Do that to no Man which thou hatest*, which shews it at least to be a Maxim received among the Jews. But what need of farther Testimony? since our Blessed Lord himself, at the time when he stamp'd it anew with the Impress of his own Authority, declares it to be no other than the very *Law and the Prophets*, i. e. the genuine Result of all that *Moses* in his Law, or the Prophets, as his Interpreters, had taught concerning the natural Duties of Justice and Mercy: By us therefore, who are Christians, it ought to be embraced as a most sacred Law of our Religion; A Law derived from the highest Source both of Antiquity and Authority, and bound upon us by the very strongest Bonds of ingenuous Obedience; the special Enforcements of which do arise chiefly from two Considerations.

First, From the common Relation we bear to one God and Father; and from his express Authority intervening to require our Obedience to this Law, back'd with a condescending Example to excite us to it, and guide us in performing it.

FOR

For if our natural Equality and the mutual Dependence we have upon each other, according to the Dispositions of Providence, be a natural Reason sufficient to oblige us *to do to all Men as we would that they should do unto us*, then certainly the Sense we ought always to have of our absolute Dependence upon God, as the Maker and Preserver of us all, is a religious Reason of much more Force to bind us to the strictest Observance of this Duty: Especially if we consider that we are not left to deduce *This* our selves from the bare Intendment of God's Providence, clear and easie as that Deduction is; but we have it proposed to us as the most explicite and solemn Declaration of his Will, and that too expounded (lest possibly we should still pervert his Meaning) by the most gracious and instructive Example: For we are required to be *merciful as God is merciful, and perfect as he is perfect*; and we are informed at the same time, that *he maketh his Sun to rise on the good, and on the evil, that he sendeth his Rain on the just and unjust*. If therefore we would approve our selves *the Children of our Father which is in Heaven*, the Rule of Perfection that prescribes to our Imitation must be, not to do to others just as they have done to us (which is the narrow Measure of Peevishness and Partiality) but generously and piously to do, for God's sake, all that Good, however undeserv'd, to others, which we our selves should expect from them, not considering our own Desert; nay, in truth, which we have received, and do hope to receive, notwithstanding our great Demerit, at the Hand of God.

Again, the Enforcement of the Christian's Obligation to this Duty gathers new Strength from our mutual Union and Fellowship in Christ, and from his *New Commandment* of loving one another after his own most inviting Pattern.

FOR if the natural Alliance of Men or their politick Combination one with another, be a good Reason to bind them interchangeably to all the good Offices of Humanity and Love, then doubtless their spiritual Kindred in Christ, and their Incorporation into that heavenly Society, his Church, must be a much nearer and a closer Tie, and much more engaging and endearing: For Christians are represented in *Scripture*, as being *one Body under one Head, the Lord Jesus, and every one Members of one another*: And, as it would be unnatural in the Members of the same Body not to administer to one another according to their respective Functions, not to have a Fellow-feeling both in the Sense of Pain and Pleasure, not to bear with each other's Infirmities, and supply, as much as possible, each other's Defects; so, and much worse, would it be for Christians not to have the most intimate Communication together, and the tenderest Concern for each other, not to delight to do all the Good to others, that every one, in a like Case, might reasonably look for himself; not to refrain with Abhorrence from doing the least imaginable Evil to others, that any one, so circumstanced, might justly think a Grievance. And it would be the more monstrous in Christians to be otherwise affected, because Love is the Band of their mystical Union in Christ, the Spirit

rit of Love is the very Life of the Body; with which that it might be fulfilled, our Lord hath pathetically inculcated the Duty in a peculiar Precept; and that Precept at once heightened and sweetened by that most marvellous Instance of compassionate Love which he himself manifested in the Redemption of the World: For Christ loved us, when we were Enemies both to him and to ourselves; he laid down his Life for us in the abundance of his Love, even when we were in a State of Rebellion against him: And he hath positively enjoined us to follow this great *Exemplar*, and even *as he hath loved us, so also to love one another*. And *This* shews us the strictness of our Obligation to obey this Royal Law of the Text, when taken in its very widest Compass; *This* shews, that no Unworthiness of our Fellow-Christians, no untoward Behaviour, no Malice nor Mischief, on their Part, can deprive them of their Title to that equitable Dealing, which here, with the exactest Justice, is allotted for the common Portion of all Men: In a Word, *This* binds the highest Pitch and the hardest Part of the Duty fast upon the Conscience of every Christian, even *to love our Enemies*, and *to do good to those who hate us*, Good for their Evil, and to be always kind, always tender-hearted, *forgiving one another*, and offering our Forgiveness to those who are most irreconcilable, *even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us*.

HAVING thus set forth the special Enforcements and Improvements of this Rule in the Text,

Text, as we stand obliged to it by the Christian Law, I proceed,

III. To consider, how far its just Extent reaches.

AND without all Peradventure, it extends it self throughout the whole Compass of our Duty towards our Neighbour. Some indeed have raised a nice Question, whether it does not likewise comprehend our Duty towards God, which perhaps might be well enough resolved into some such Principle. For whatsoever the most generous Benefactor, the most indulgent Parent, the most gracious and munificent of Princes, might expect or demand from their Clients, Children, or Subjects, all that, and infinitely more, is due from the Creature to the Creator, to him in whom we live, and move, and have our being, and who is *All in All* to every one of us. But whatever Analogy of Reason there may be in this, it is plain that the Rule it self properly relates only to our mutual Enticourse and Dealings one with another: To the Regulation of which, how far soever extended, it is entirely adequate, which will instantly appear, if we do but just reflect that it is equally well suited to all the various Relations, Conditions, and Circumstances of human Life; and which that it is not liable to any Exception, to none at least that can create any just Scruple or real Difficulty.

(1.) I say first, the Rule is equally suited to all the various Relations, Conditions, and Circumstances of human Life. A Rule it is, that there is none so high as to be above its Influence, none so low as to be beneath its Care, none so lawless as to be out of its Jurisdiction.

KINGS, Magistrates, Parents, Patrons, Tutors, Masters, and all Superiors, are hereby entitled to all that Obedience and Submission, that Honour and Reverence, which are respectively due unto them; because there is no Man in any Degree of Superiority, but who might justly, and ought seasonably to insist upon the same, in proportion to his Rank and Dignity.

SUBJECTS, Children, Servants, Slaves, the basest and most abject Creatures upon Earth, have hereby an Interest in the Protection, the Beneficence, the Care, the Kindness, the Assistance and Relief of their respective Superiors, because it is what these very Superiors, could they suppose themselves in an inferior Station, would be ready to crave or claim.

EQUALS have hereby a Right to all courteous Respect, and civil Treatment from their Equals, because no Man, in equal Degree, loves to be despised and trampled upon as an Inferiour.

In brief (for it were endless to enlarge) all Men are, by the Tenour of this Golden Rule, obliged to exercise Justice and Mercy, Sincerity and Candour, and all kind of social Virtues towards all, because there is no Man but thinks he hath a good Claim to the like Usage, where
ever

ever his own Reputation or Interest is concerned.

GIVE me leave only to add in the Words of the Apostle, (Rom. Chap. xii.): *Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit Adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other Commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.* And this Saying is most commodiously explained and applied by that other here in the Text, *All things whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you, do ye even so to them;* which, as hath been before observ'd, is at once the fullest Measure of that Love which we owe to our Neighbour, and the surest Demonstration of it. For so long as we are ready to do all things to him just in the same manner as we might in reason expect that he should do unto us, so long we cannot fail in any regular Instance of Love towards him, any more than we can cease to love our selves. And so far consequently this is a perfect Rule to walk by.

(2.) **AND** it is the more apparently so, because it is liable to no Exceptions, to none at least that can create any just Scruple or real Difficulty. For those few, which at first glance may seem to be excepted Cases, will be found, upon a closer Attention, to be either gross Mistakes concerning its Meaning, or manifest Deviations from it, or most perverse Applications of it.

THUS, if it should be pretended, that a Man is not obliged to do Good to his Enemy, because
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forsooth he is so stout, that he would scorn to receive a Kindness at his Hands, even in the greatest Straits or Extremity; I say, this Pretence would not be a fair Exception to the Rule, but a palpable Mistake in the sense of it. For it runs in the general, *whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you*, (that is, any Man indifferently, not this, or that Man in particular) *do ye even so to them*. And there is no Man, abstracting from such personal (and those too very unreasonable and unchristian) Antipathies, but would be glad to be relieved by *any* Man in his Distress.

AGAIN, If a Master, who is in Health and Strength, should compel his Servant that is just recovering from Sickness, to hard Labour, pretending that he imposes no more than he is willing himself to do; this would be so far from a just Exception, that it were indeed a plain Deviation from the Rule, which requires, that whatsoever we would that Men should do unto us, we should do the like to them, *i. e.* putting our selves in the same Circumstances. But there is such a Disparity of Circumstances between him that hath been but lately sick, and him that is perfectly well, that it would be the greatest Hardship imaginable to exact the same Labour from the one, which the other perhaps may be able to perform with Ease. And therefore such a cruel Task-Master is not only subjected to the Rule, but stands manifestly convicted and condemned by it.

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As to the Instance formerly mentioned of the habitual Drunkard pressing his Friends to take off their full Cups, because this is the *Welcome* that he himself would desire; I say, the Man hath first taken Pains to make himself a Beast, and then is for urging others to wallow with him in the Mire that he delights in. But then This is a most unreasonable and unnatural Imposition, and I think it is not properly an Exception to the Rule, that it should not take place against Reason and Nature, which it could never be design'd to do. And therefore it must be prodigiously misapplied indeed, if ever it be wrested to so cross a purpose.

THE Case of the Judge and the Malefactor, as was observ'd, is a Case determin'd beforehand by the Laws of God and Man. And the Commonwealth hath a Right to the Punishment of a Criminal convict by the Hands of publick Justice. And it is no real Exception to the Rule, to say, that it shall not obtain against Law and Right; which it can never do, without notoriously perverting *Both*, and without being it self also violently perverted.

THE Rule therefore, for what appears to the contrary, stands free from all Exceptions and Limitations, since those that may seem to carry the face of such are so easily distinguished and accounted for, that they can never perplex the Conscience, or warp the Conduct of any sober minded Man. And consequently the Rule to all Intents and Purposes is as good as Universal. I come now,

IV. IN the last place to shew, how applicable this Rule is to all the good Uses and Purposes for which it was intended, and how well calculated to serve the Interests of Mankind, if duly to applied.

(I.) AND it is most visibly and undeniably a Rule, it self the easiest of all others to be understood, and the readiest for practical Use, and at the same time the surest Direction to us in the Knowledge and Practice of all the several Parts of our Duty towards our Neighbour. It lies obvious to every Eye, and level to all Capacities; it requires no subtle Wit, nor knotty Head, but only an honest and an upright Heart, both to comprehend and to apply it in its utmost Latitude. And I dare be bold to averr, that whosoever makes it the Regulation of his Conscience, and is careful to square all his Actions accordingly, will more clearly discern, and perfectly understand all the nicest Measures and Boundaries of Right and Wrong, than the Man who hath turn'd over all the School-men and Casuists, or purchased his Experience in all the Courts of Justice and Equity.

NAY, it is a Rule that is not only exceeding easie both to be conceiv'd and applied in all Occurrences, but it even obtrudes it self upon the Understanding, and applies it self as it were of its own accord, without the least Labour of the Brain, if the Will be not wanting. It is like a straight Line, that immediately upon the Comparison

parison demonstrates both its own Straitness, and the Obliquity of what is not so: For so does the Equity of doing as a Man would be done by, at once exhibit it self to the view, and discover the Iniquity of the contrary Practice. Imagine the Case to be as hard and as nice as possible, let a Man but make it once his own, and it soon resolves its self, without the help of an Interpreter. For there is no Man but will tell you to a scruple what is his own due; and let him but turn the Scales, and the same must needs appear to be his Neighbour's Right. At least the Claim is equal: And therefore if he weighs in one Balance for himself, and in another for his Neighbour, he is notoriously partial and unjust, and cannot but stand mute and self-condemn'd at the Bar of his own Conscience.

IN short, the Rule before us is so immutably true, so inflexibly strait, and withal so very conspicuous, that it cannot be disputed, it cannot be mistaken, it cannot so much as be overlook'd by any Man, but who is præ-determined to transgress it with a high Hand, in spite of the Conviction of his own Mind.

(2.) BUT the Excellency of this Rule shines brightest in the using, being so admirably well fitted as it is, to serve the Interests of Mankind, and to promote their Happiness, both in a publick and private Capacity.

WERE Princes to fix *This* for the immoveable Boundary of their Prerogative, they would then always exercise their Authority with Safety and Satisfaction to themselves, as well as to the Ease and

and Benefit of their People; they would even chuse to govern, as they themselves (had that been their Allotment) would have been willing to be governed; they would remember to look up to the Sovereign Lord of all, the Original of all Power and Perfection, and study to copy, as near as possible, after him; they would desire and endeavour (that which the Philosopher proposes as the best Model for a Prince to form himself by†) even to be just such to their Subjects, as they would have God to be to themselves; that is to say, always kind and propitious to them, always careful and tender of them, always provident for their Good and Welfare, in ways perhaps by them unthought of and unforeseen, very often beyond their Hopes, sometimes almost exceeding their very Wishes: A Happiness, at this time, peculiarly ours above all the Nations upon Earth, if we were but duly sensible of our own Happiness!

On the other hand, were *Subjects*, all in their several Stations, to act up to this uniform Principle, there would never be any Disturbance given to Civil Government; the Fierceness of Animosity would then grow mild, and the Hissing of Faction entirely cease; there would be no malicious Misrepresentation of a Prince's best Actions, no clamorous Opposition to his wisest Councils, no devilish Invention employed to amuse the People with Lies, and to deceive

† *Quoniam, Deorum feci mentionem, optimè hoc Exemplum Principi constituam; ad quod formetur, ut se talem esse civibus, quales sibi Deus velit. Seneca L. 1. de Clementia.*

them

them into Discontent, no Tares of Sedition scattered where the good Seed of the Gospel only should be sown; in fine, no specious Colours laid on to add Charms to the Witchcraft of Rebellion, and make it look innocent and inviting to vulgar Eyes: I say, were Men to do to others as *they* would be done unto, we should never hear of any of these Enemies to Peace, or Disturbers of it: For even they who are at a distance from the Helm, and have no share in the Administration of Affairs, must for ever own, that, were they themselves to be advanced to that high Trust and Power, they would judge it but a very ill Requital, to have the Cares and Tails of Government multiplied, and made much heavier, by such ungrateful and unprofitful Behaviour; they would doubtless call it by the proper Name, of Sedition, and think it a Crime worthy of the severest Punishment, if they should find themselves encountered on all Hands, by all the basest Arts and most unfair Methods that designing Heads can contrive to enflame turbulent Spirits, and embroil the publick Quiet: Nor is there room here to alledge, that wherever Parties are bandying against Parties, this is the Treatment that they must expect from each other, as they may happen to prevail in their turns; For, *my Brethren, these things ought not so to be*; since, it must be agreed, that the Christian Standard, which never varies, is, *to do to all Men, as ye would that they should do unto you, not as they may have done to you, or may be likely to do to you.*

AGAIN,

AGAIN, If every private Man were to carry This as a Living Law about him, and make it the Companion and Counsellor of his retired Thoughts, and a Watcher, as it were, over the secret Motions of his Soul, then would all those troublesome and self-tormenting Passions, that are so apt to ruffle the Tranquillity of our Minds, be perfectly calm'd and conquered; boisterous Anger, sour Malice, fretting Envy, bloody Revenge, would find no Heart to give them Reception, nor Food to nourish them: For every Man that feels what passes within him, and reflects at all, must needs perceive the Irregularity and Unreasonableness of these Passions in himself, which he is always ready, upon cool Deliberation, and when least concern'd to condemn in others, but is then sure to have a very acute Sense of their injurious Nature, when they are levell'd against himself as the Object of their Fury.

—LASTLY, Would Men fairly bring all their Actions to the same Test, then would those pernicious Practices that undermine the Foundations of all friendly Correspondence and equal Commerce be utterly banished; There would be no proper Employment left for Censoriousness and Slander, Lying and Dissembling, Avarice and Extortion, Cheating and Stealing, Treachery and Perjury: For all Mankind are sufficiently convinc'd, that these Vices are infinitely fruitful in Mischief; and no Man, who is duly sensible of this, can think himself privileged to do that Mischief by them, which he would be unwilling

ling to suffer from them: And if, what all unanimously condemn, every one would industriously avoid, Men would then live together at perfect Quiet, and in great Security: No Man's Reputation would be basely attacked, no Man's Property either slyly or violently invaded; there would be no Temptation nor Inclination to malicious Prosecutions, no Handle nor Pretext for vexatious Law-Suits; the very Noise of Strife would be hush'd in the Courts, as well as that of complaining in the Streets.

SUCH would be the blessed Effects of this Christian Principle, if it were uniformly reduced to Practice. And, O that I could say, this too is our own Case; that we were a People so disposed to be happy among our selves!

BUT alas! I fear, our Character is of another hew, too nearly resembling that of the Jews in the times of *Isaiah* and *Jeremiah*: A People, *who are grievous Revolters, walking with Slanders, they are Brass and Iron, all Corrupters:—* A People, *whose Hands are defiled with Blood, and their Fingers with Iniquity; whose Lips have spoken Lies, and their Tongue uttered Perverseness:—* A People, *who know not the way of Peace, and in whose Goings there is no Judgment; who have made them crooked Paths, where Truth faileth, and Equity cannot enter, and where he that departeth from Evil maketh himself a Prey:—* A People, *where every Brother will utterly supplant; whose Houses are full of Deceit, by which they wax fat and shine; yea, and overpass the Deeds of the Wicked:—* A People (to add no more

more to the Character) that proceed from Evil
to Evil, and weary themselves to commit In-
iquity.

THIS is a Catalogue of some of the Vices that
were most predominant in the Prophet's Days :
but they are all of them, I think, too closely
copied in our own Practice: And whereas it is ob-
servable, that among other the Marks of a very
corrupt and degenerate People, this is fix'd upon
the Jews for one, that they were extremely ad-
dicted to Lies, and Calumnies, and all manner
of perverse Speeches; in that kind of Licentious-
ness, If I am not much mistaken, we may pre-
tend to the Mastery : For never certainly in any
Age or Country, did the Spirit of lewd Lying
and Libelling, that hath been wont to walk in
Darkness, appear so openly at Noon-day, and so
audaciously : It possesses our Tongues and our
Pens, and fills both with the *Poison of Asps*; it
sallies forth daily from the Press, and (like *Sa-
tan*, whose Offspring it is,) goeth to and fro,
far and wide, seeking whom to devour, preying
upon the clearest Innocence, and blasting the
fairest good Names: It meddles with Matters of
the greatest Moment, and the nicest Nature, on
Purpose to misreport or misconstrue them : It
flies at Dignity without Distinction, not sparing
even the Supreme : It mingles with the People
from the Highest to the Lowest, with a Design
to infect them; and, to that End, it is perpe-
tually infusing the most groundless Jealousies
and Prejudices, and insinuating even the most
invidious and odious Charges against those who

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are in Authority, and endeavouring, by all the united Cunning and Impudence of Falshood, to work things up to a Pitch of Distraction and Confusion.

THIS, sure, if any other, is *an Iniquity to be punished by the Judges*; and pardon me if I wish it could once meet with its deserved Punishment; for it seems to have been artful enough hitherto to baffle the Force of the Laws in being, or rather bold enough to mock their Weakness; nay, it hath puzzled the best Skill of our wisest State-Physitians, to find a more efficacious Remedy for this Stubborn and Epidemical Evil. I pray God at length rebuke the foul Spirit with which we are so grievously vexed, and cast it out of us, and send the Spirit of Truth and Concord in the stead, that so we may recover our selves out of these crooked Paths, and find and follow the Way of Peace before it be hidden from our Eyes!

AND, having said thus much, I shall not digress farther nor spend any more of your time, especially in the way of Complaint, which I do not delight in: And yet I may be permitted to say, that I have not wandered, by a great deal, so far from my Text, as the Persons, guilty of such Practices, do from the Duty enjoind in it, which, most certainly, obliges us to *put away all Lying, and speak every Man Truth with his Neighbour, as we are Members one of another,* and ought to hold peaceable and useful Communication together; and as no Man in particular would be willing to have his own Reputation aspers'd,

Spent, or his Credulity practis'd upon, no Man would willingly, by any of the Liars Arts, be led into Errors, and Snares, and very great Inconveniences, both to the Detriment of his private Affairs, and to the Disturbance and Hazard of the Society in which he is involved.

For what remains therefore, let us endeavour to rectifie all that is amiss, and to reform our whole Conduct according to this perfect Standard in the Text: And, at the same time, let us bless and adore both the Wisdom and Goodness of God, who hath provided so well for the Ease, and Peace, and Welfare of Mankind, by this compendious Maxim of all Justice and all Charity, that we must be wilfully blind, blind even to our own Interest, if we do not see, embrace and adhere to it: For it is a Maxim (as hath fully appeared) not only highly reasonable, and easily intelligible, but even self-evident, and (as I may so speak) self-applicable. And that which seems to be spoken by *Moses*, of the Moral Law in general, is most remarkably true of this particular Branch of it. *This Commandment is not bidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in Heaven, that thou shouldst say, who shall go up for us to Heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the Sea, that thou shouldst say, who shall go over the Sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy Mouth, and in thy Heart, that thou mayest do it, Dent. xxx. 11, 12, 13, 14.* And if notwithstanding all this intimate

intimate Familiarity and Acquaintance to
 hearken to it, and do it, the very Heathen will
 rise up in Judgment against us, and it shall be
 more tolerable in the Day of equal Retribution
 for *Epictetus* and *Severus* than for us. God
 grant therefore that we may not fall short of
 Mercy for neglecting to do Justice, that we may
 not receive that at God's Hand which we *would*
not, for refusing to do to Men, as we would that
 they should have done unto us. *Amen.*

FINIS

